

CHAPTER 2

Invitations

Invitations vary in style and format depending upon the type of occasion for which they are issued. The broad categories of formal and informal occasions will be used in this discussion.

Formal. A formal occasion might include an official ceremony, any type of reception, official luncheons or dinners, dances or weddings. In these situations, a formal invitation is most appropriate.

Formal invitations are generally in one of the following forms:

1. Fully engraved¹
2. Semi-engraved
3. Computer generated
4. Handwritten
5. A phone call followed by a "To remind" card

In any of these five types of invitations, use the following standard format as a guide:

Vice Admiral and Mrs. Paul Anthony Connelly²
request the pleasure of the company of
Rear Admiral and Mrs. Cerny³
at a reception⁴
in honor of the Chief of Naval Operations and Mrs. Smith⁵
on Saturday, the first of May
at seven o'clock⁶
Bethesda Naval Medical Center Officers' Club⁷

R.S.V.P.⁸
(703) 695-5333

Military: Service Dress White⁹
Civilian: Informal

¹ The expression "engraved" is used herein for simplicity. It is intended to be synonymous with other modes of printing such as thermography, or raised print, which is a very acceptable substitute.

² Use of complete names of hosts: if for very senior officials, the position, title, and spouse's name; e.g., The Secretary of the Navy and Mrs. Claytor.

³ Lines 2 and 3 may be combined to read simply, request the pleasure of your company.

⁴ Indicate the type of function as: at dinner, at cocktails, at a buffet-dinner, etc.

⁵ The "in honor of" phrase may also properly be the first line of an engraved invitation, or the last line.

⁶ Figures are never used in a formal invitation; the day and month are capitalized. The following examples of time indications are also correct:

- a. "from six to eight o'clock"
- b. "at half past six o'clock"
- c. "at half after six o'clock"
- d. from six-thirty to eight-thirty o'clock" (*used only when two half hour periods must be shown and space is limited*)

⁷ Specify the location of the function. If a residence is involved, the address may be reflected instead in the lower right corner.

⁸ If it is desired that a written response be made, to a place other than the site of the function, indicate the mailing address here.

⁹ Specify an attire which is appropriate to the type of function and the hour.

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The following rules apply to the preparation of formal invitations:

1. Corps and service designations and retired status are never reflected on invitations extended by or to husband and wife.
2. The phrase "honor of the company" is considered to be more formal than "pleasure of the company." The former should be used on invitations to Ambassadors and others of comparable rank.
3. The date and hour of the event as well as ranks, titles, and names should always be spelled out in full. Permissible abbreviations include "Mr.," "Mrs.," and "R.S.V.P." In addition it is permissible to use an individual's initials if this is his or her preferred format. If the party is in honor of someone or some occasion, this may be indicated as "in honor of..." "to meet..." or "to introduce..." as appropriate to the occasion. This is generally on the top of the card or underneath the line specifying the type of function to be held.
4. When the host/hostess has a personal flag, seal, crest, or insignia, this may be used on the invitation as appropriate.
5. The appropriate attire should always be clearly specified in the bottom right hand corner of the invitation; e.g., "Uniform: Black Tie" or "Civilian Informal." (See Annex F for guidance on attire.)
6. It is most appropriate for all invitations to be written in longhand and black ink.
7. In addressing envelopes spell out in full rank and name (e.g., Lieutenant Commander and Mrs. Timothy Daniel Johnson).
8. Invitations are inserted engraving up, top of card appearing at the top of the envelope, so that they may be easily read as they are withdrawn from the envelope.
9. Formal invitations should be mailed at least three to four weeks in advance of the planned activity.

Fully Engraved Invitations. These are the most formal and expensive invitations. They usually bear the crest of the host or hostess.

When issued by the Secretary of State or a U.S. Ambassador, invitations bear the Great Seal of the Secretary of State. Similarly, a replica of a Flag Officer's personal flag may be centered at the top or placed in the upper left corner of invitations. Navy commanding officers of shore-based activities, squadrons and flotilla commanders, naval attachés, naval liaison officers, and chiefs of naval missions or other diplomatic duty missions who wish to use an insignia on their invitations, may use the gold officer's crest. Official seals and other insignia in gold or color are often used on invitations for public ceremonies such as inaugurations, dedications, commencements, ship christenings and commissionings. Individuals sometimes have the family crest or coat of arms embossed without color at the top of wedding or other important invitations.

Fully Engraved Invitation:

On the occasion of the International Naval Review 2000



*The Chief of Naval Operations
requests the pleasure of your company
at a luncheon*

*on Wednesday, the fifth of July
at half after twelve o'clock
on board USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC 20)
Pier 40, Hudson River, Manhattan*

R.S.V.P.

(703) 695-0000

Uniform: Summer White

Wedding Invitations. Wedding invitations as a type of formal invitation are generally fully engraved. There are a multitude of styles and colors of paper available to the bride for wedding invitations and the standard plain white card is no longer a must.

The following examples are suitable formats:

Commander and Mrs. Joseph Brian Connelly
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Margaret Louise
to
Paul Anthony Jones, Junior
Lieutenant Junior Grade, United States Navy
Saturday, the seventh of January
at eleven o'clock
Holy Cross Church
Washington, District of Columbia

If the bride is a member of the Armed Forces, it may be shown as:

Margaret Louise¹⁰
Lieutenant, United States Navy

If the parents of the bride are deceased, invitations may be issued by a close, older relative:

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of their granddaughter
Margaret Louise Connelly

If the bride's father is deceased or divorced and her mother is remarried:

Mrs. William Green
requests the honor of your presence
at the marriage of her daughter
Margaret Louise Connelly

Captain and Mrs. William Green
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of her daughter
Margaret Louise Connelly

If the bride's mother is deceased and her father is remarried:

Commander and Mrs. Joseph Brian Connelly
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of his daughter¹¹
Margaret Louise

If the bride is a young widow:

Commander and Mrs. Joseph Brian Connelly
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Margaret Connelly Jones

¹⁰ If either the bride or the groom's rank is that of Commander or Lieutenant Colonel or senior, it is properly shown with the rank preceding the name:

Commander Peter David Jones, Junior
United States Navy

Those of the rank Lieutenant Commander or Major and below use the following format:

Elizabeth Eileen Smith
Lieutenant, United States Navy

¹¹ "Their" may be substituted for "his" provided the relationship between daughter and stepmother is a close one.

Invitations to church weddings customarily do not request a reply. "R.S.V.P." is included on the invitations to receptions which appear as:

Reception
immediately following the ceremony
The Naval Officers' Club
Bethesda, Maryland

R.S.V.P.
700 Idaho Street, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20320

or

Commander and Mrs. Joseph Brian Connelly
request the pleasure of your company
at the reception
following the ceremony
700 Idaho Street, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia
R.S.V.P.

If everyone invited to attend the ceremony is also invited to attend the reception, simply add the following to the basic wedding invitation:

and afterwards at the reception
Army-Navy Country Club
Arlington, Virginia

When double envelopes are used, the outer one should have the full name and address of the invited guests handwritten in ink; and the inner one, the guests' courtesy titles and surnames only (Mr. and Mrs. Brown; Rear Admiral and Mrs. Symthe; Commander Black). The inside envelope is placed within the outer envelope in such a manner that the writing on the former faces the back of the latter so that it will be on top when the outer envelope is opened.

Semi-engraved Invitations. Partially engraved cards, adaptable to any date or occasion are appropriate for receptions, dinners, luncheons, cocktails, etc. Less costly than the invitations which are engraved for each function, they are widely used by those who entertain often.

All information to be added to the semi-engraved invitation should be handwritten in the color ink of the engraving, preferably black.

Guests of honor are designated by writing the appropriate phrase above the names of the hosts or below the time on all invitations except that intended for the honored party.

Semi-engraved Invitation to a Reception



Captain and Mrs. Paul Anthony Jones
request the pleasure of the company of
Lieutenant Commander and Mrs. Connelley
at a reception

on Thursday, the second of December

at seven to nine o'clock

to introduce Admiral and Mrs. Brian Richard Smith

R.S.V.P.

(703)224-0017

Army-Navy Country Club
Civilian Informal

Semi-engraved Invitation to Cocktails



*The Chief of Naval Operations
and Mrs. Johnson
request the pleasure of the company of
Captain and Mrs. Henry
at cocktails*

on Saturday, the seventh of January

at seven to nine o'clock

Jingey House

*R.S.V.P.
(703)695-0000*

Civilian Informal

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Semi-engraved Invitation to a Luncheon in Honor of Someone

In Honor of the 'Naval Attache' to the Embassy of Australia
and Mrs. Morton



The Chief of Naval Operations
and Mrs. Johnson
request the pleasure of the company of
Captain and Mrs. Thomas
at lunch

on Thursday, the thirteenth of March
at half past twelve o'clock
Quarters Ten

R.S.V.P.

(703)695-0000

Civilian Informal

Semi-engraved Invitation to a Dinner in Honor of Someone

In honor of the Vice Chief of Naval Operations
and Mrs. Jones



*The Chief of Naval Operations
and Mrs. Johnson
request the pleasure of the company of
General and Mrs. White*

at dinner

on Friday, the twenty-first of November

at eight o'clock

Decatur House

R.S.V.P.

(703)695-0000

Civilian Blackie

Semi-engraved Invitation to Dinner



*The Chief of Naval Operations
and Mrs. Johnson
request the pleasure of the company of
Vice Admiral and Mrs. Smith
at dinner*

*on Wednesday, the tenth of December
at eight o'clock*

*R.S.V.P.
(703)695-0000*

*Army-Navy Country Club
Dinner Dress Blue*

Semi-engraved Invitation to Two Married Naval Officers



Lieutenant Commander and Mrs. Doe
request the pleasure of the company of

Lieutenant Commander Smith
And Lieutenant Smith
at dinner

on Saturday, the fifth of May

at half past seven o'clock
1623 Summer Lane
Alexandria, Virginia

R.S.V.P.
(703) 1695-0000

Civilian Informal

For additional information on addressing women with official positions, see Chapter 12,
"Forms of Address."

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Computer-generated Invitations. Computer-generated invitations are every bit as attractive and impressive as an invitation produced by a printer. Just keep in mind the time and cost factors when determining whether to "do them yourself" or send them to a printer.

Handwritten Invitations. Formal invitations may be written entirely by hand on any formal writing paper, preferably white, in the standard wording and format. White correspondence cards, 4 by 5 inches in size, often topped with the flag officer's insignia or officer's crest are most often used.



Commander and Mrs. Thomas Francis O'Brien
 request the pleasure of the company of
 Commander and Mrs. Kennedy
 at Brunch
 on Sunday, the fifteenth of October
 at half past eleven o'clock
 Quarters C

R.S.V.P.
 (703) 695-0000

Civilian Informal


Telephone Invitations and "To remind" Cards. It is quite correct to issue formal invitations by telephone. The host or hostess may call, or have someone call. In military circles, an aide often calls for his or her superior. In tendering telephone invitations, give the same complete information regarding the event as is provided in a written invitation.

An appropriate phrasing of a telephone invitation by the military aide would be:

"This is Lieutenant Ray, aide to Vice Admiral Orion. Vice Admiral and Mrs. Thomas Orion would like to extend an invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson for dinner on Saturday, the eighteenth of March at eight o'clock. The dinner will be at their residence, Quarters F, and the attire is Civilian Informal. Will you R.S.V.P.? My telephone number is 456-7377."

A telephone invitation is generally followed by a "To remind" card to those guests who accept the invitation. The format is identical to any other written invitation except "To remind" is written in the lower left hand corner in place of R.S.V.P. It is permissible to cross out the R.S.V.P. if already printed on the card and to write in "To remind."

A "To remind" Card for a Reception

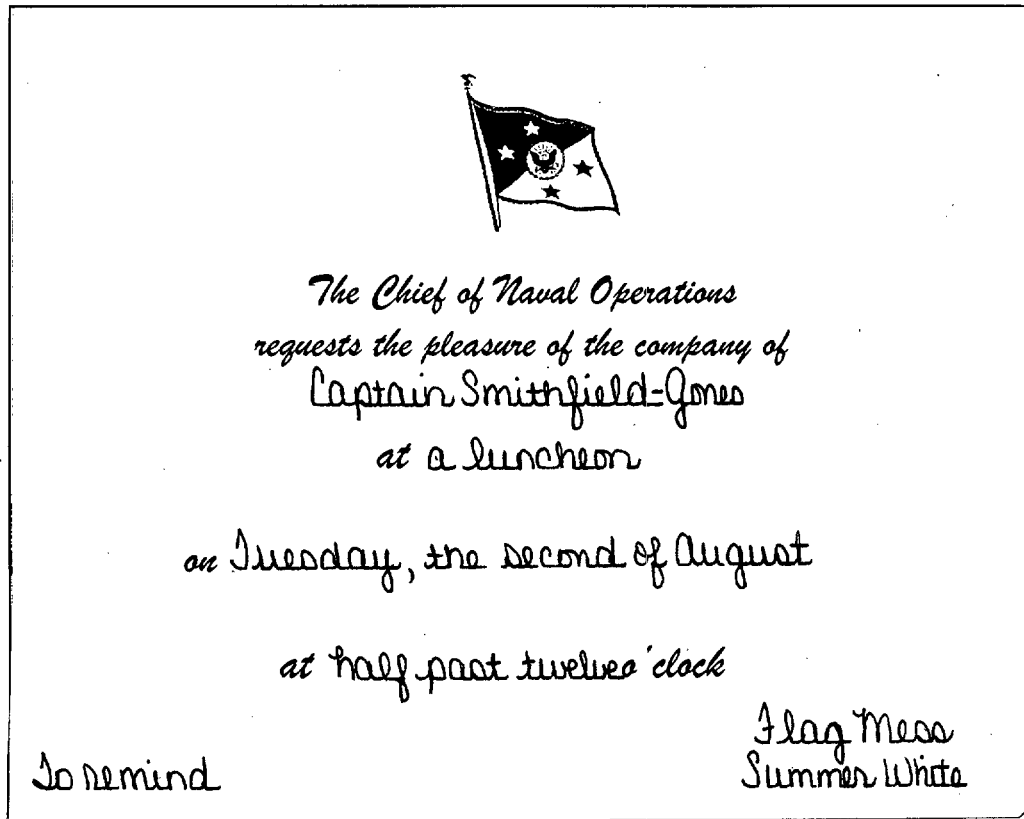


*The Chief of Naval Operations
and Mrs. Johnson
request the pleasure of the company of
Professor Eisenhower
at cocktails
on Wednesday, the twenty-eighth of July
at half after five o'clock*

~~R.S.V.P.~~ *To remind*
~~(703)695-0000~~

*Jingle House
Civilian Informal*

A "To remind" card for a Luncheon



Informal Invitations. Invitations for informal occasions, such as unofficial luncheons, dinners, cocktail parties, buffet dinners, etc., may be issued by telephone or in writing. A telephone call may be followed by a written "To remind" card but this is not essential.

Invitations may be written on informal cards (informals) or on a variety of invitations available for specific occasions in stationary stores. In addition, a short, personal note from the host or hostess is appropriate.

Informal Cards. Fold-over cards or "informals," measuring approximately 5 by 3½ inches, are made of smooth, heavy paper in white or cream, and have matching envelopes. The name is centered on the outside. The invitation may be written on the inside, or on the outside above and/or below the name. It is correct for the informal cards of a very senior officer such as a three or four-star admiral to bear only his grade and surname. A rear admiral's card usually shows his full name, as do those of less senior officers.

Informal Invitation on a Folded Informal Card

MRS. JOHN PAUL JONES

In honor of
Mrs. John Doe

Luncheon
Tuesday, 1 March
half past twelve

To remind

RECALLING INVITATIONS

It is considered more gracious to postpone than to cancel an invitation. When formal invitations have to be recalled due to unavoidable circumstances, printed forms are generally used to notify guests. In those instances when time is very short, telephone notifications are a necessity.

Sample of a Card for Recalling an Invitation

Owing to official mourning for
The late King Paul of Greece
The Ambassador of Norway and Mrs. Eagen
are obliged to recall their invitation
to a Reception
on Wednesday, the sixteenth of March

RESPONDING TO INVITATIONS

Every attempt should be made to respond to an invitation promptly out of consideration for the hostess or host who must make arrangements on the basis of the number attending and invite others in the case of a regret. Replies to brunches, luncheons, and dinners should be made within 24 hours.

Generally, a telephone number for R.S.V.P.s is provided on the card. Occasionally, an address for R.S.V.P.s is given, in which case a short note is appropriate. For very formal or large-scale functions, R.S.V.P. cards are enclosed which the guest fills out and returns.

If a R.S.V.P. has been requested, it is discourteous to wait until within a few days of the event before responding, or worse, not to respond at all.

WITHDRAWING ACCEPTANCES

Since an invitation to the White House supersedes any other social engagement, a guest who has already accepted an invitation for the same date must write or telephone the host/hostess immediately and withdraw from the first engagement.

Official duties necessarily take precedence over social engagements; however, a later invitation cannot properly be used to escape one already accepted unless the second is official. The only unofficial yet legitimate reasons for withdrawing an acceptance would be severe illness, unforeseen but mandatory absence from the city, or the recent death of a close relative.

Withdrawing a Previously Accepted Invitation

Admiral and Mrs. David Peter Black
regret that owing to the illness of Mrs. Black
they must withdraw from
Mr. and Mrs. White's dinner
on the first of July

Admiral and Mrs. David Peter Black
regret that because of an invitation
to the White House
they must withdraw from
Mr. and Mrs. White's dinner
on the first of July